



January 26, 2021

To: Honored Chair Rep. Lamar and Distinguished Members of the Transportation Committee,

In my capacity as the River Steward at the Connecticut River Conservancy (CRC), I write in **support with modifications** of Sections 5 and 6 of HB 261, An Act Concerning Recommendations by the Department of Motor Vehicles.

When Aquatic Invasive Species (AIS) are introduced to waterbodies, AIS outcompete native species and, as a result replace habitat for threatened and sensitive species. Thick mats of AIS limit light penetration in the water column, thereby reducing the production of oxygen by aquatic plants and creating dead zones, areas that lack sufficient oxygen for aquatic life to survive. In recent years, these mats of AIS have crowded out boaters, anglers and those who come to recreate on the Connecticut River. Marinas and municipalities have reported that they can no longer access boat slips and docks due to the severity of the AIS infestations, limiting business opportunity. These AIS threaten the ecological integrity of the Connecticut River, as well as the economic viability of local businesses that depend on the Connecticut River.

Sections 5 & 6 pertain to “Save Our Lakes” commemorative license plates to promote awareness of Connecticut’s waterbodies and direct funding to the account established under section 14-21aa Through a \$60 fee applied to the sale of commemorative plates, funds would support AIS education, planning and management. **We strongly support this initiative to generate and streamline much needed funding in order to slow the spread of AIS and manage existing infestations.**

As noted by Rivers Alliance, we support suggestions to modify the commemorative plate name to “Save our Lakes **and Rivers**” to accurately represent the distributions of funds and attract a greater number of participants to the program.

Thank you for the opportunity to comment on this bill. I can be reached at 860-704-0057 or [kwentling@ctriver.org](mailto:kwentling@ctriver.org).

Sincerely,

Kelsey Wentling  
River Steward